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Organizational matters

Rationalization of documentation and streamlining of working methods of the Executive Board

Elements of a decision

1. Reduce the overall volume of documentation by 50 per cent and set page limits for certain reports.

2. Designate all reports as either general reports or reports requiring a decision from the Executive Board.

3. Authorize the Administrator and the Executive Director to provide estimated financial figures in Board documentation.

4. Encourage the Board to explore ways of promoting more interactive dialogue among its members.

Background

1. At the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2001, members of the Board requested that the secretariat review the existing practices of the Board with a view to streamlining its documentation and working methods and to submit proposals at the current session.

2. The Administrator and the Executive Director have jointly reviewed the current legislation, in particular Executive Board decisions 96/6 and 96/45. Building on these premises, they wish to submit the present joint proposals to the Board, the principal objectives of which are to: (a) reduce the overall volume of documentation and submit more user-friendly reports; (b) ensure earlier submission of documentation, and (c) facilitate easier, more interactive dialogue

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I. Documentation

A. Volume

3. It is estimated that by the current session UNDP and UNFPA will have submitted a combined total of some 3 000 pages of documentation to the Executive Board in 2001. This volume creates a workload for the language services that is quite simply beyond the capacity of the organization; often results in serious delays that are in violation of General Assembly legislation; and impedes the full and efficient functioning of the Board.

4. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose to implement the following measures:

(a) Set a target to reduce the overall volume of documentation submitted to the Executive Board in 2002 by at least 50 per cent, with the following page limits:

(i) *Non-financial policy documents* – 10 pages;[1]

(ii) *Support papers* – 5 pages;

(iii) *Country outlines* – 4- to 6 pages;

(iv) *The results-oriented annual reports* will not exceed 25 pages;

(b) Review the financial papers to determine which statistical information should remain an integral part of the documentation.

B. Presentation

5. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose to differentiate clearly in the future between documents of a general nature (designated "G") and those requiring a decision from the Executive Board (designated "D"). The distinction between D and G documents does not in any way reflect the importance of a document or the priority to be attached to it. Rather, it bears on what action the Executive Board is requested to take on the basis of the information provided in the particular document. There are, therefore, implications on how the document is presented.

6. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose the following:

(a) Each document submitted to the Executive Board will bear a clear indication of whether it is of general nature (G) or whether it requires a decision from the Board (D). The designation given by the secretariat is for guidance only and does not preclude the Board from taking any decisions it deems appropriate;

(b) All documents submitted to the Board, with the exception of country outlines, will have a cover page;

[1] Any exceptions will have to be authorized by the Administrator or Executive Director, respectively, and reported to the Board. In no case shall such documents exceed 20 pages.

(c) The cover page for G documents will specify from three to five questions or issues arising in the document, upon which the Administrator and the Executive Director invite the Board to comment;

(d) The cover page for D documents will indicate the key elements for a decision to be adopted by the Board.

C. Timeliness

7. Reducing the volume of documentation will go some way in alleviating the problems associated with lateness of submission and timely distribution. The lateness in the availability of final financial figures, however, creates serious problems for the timely submission of all documents containing financial information. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose in the future to use estimated financial figures at the earliest possible cut-off date and to provide any final figures that may be required at a later date. Reports would be footnoted accordingly. The secretariat will make every possible effort to meet the deadlines and ensure timely distribution of languages.

II. Working methods of the Executive Board

8. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose that in the future no sessions – formal or informal – of the Executive Board be scheduled after 6.00 p.m. The Board itself should decide, in the course of its work, whether it needs to continue into evening sessions.

9. The Executive Board may wish to continue to explore methods of work that promote more interactive dialogue, including alternative seating arrangements. The Board may also wish to consider replacing written reports with oral reports when circumstances permit. The organizational matters of each session should be dealt with in a way that ensures maximum time for substantive debate. The Administrator and the Executive Director propose to discuss these matters further with the Bureau of the Executive Board.

10. The Administrator and the Executive Director will review with the Bureau of the Executive Board the optimal time requirement for each session of the Board in 2002.